

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2017

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith,

As you work on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18), we are concerned that the NDAA provides for only fifteen KC-46 tankers in FY18, which does not meet our current strategic needs. We therefore ask that you increase the number of KC-46 air refueling tankers authorized in the NDAA from fifteen tankers to eighteen.

During his testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on March 30th, General Darren McDew (Commander of the U.S. Air Force Transportation Command) testified that there is an urgent need for air refueling tankers. When asked what keeps him up at night, the General immediately responded “air-refueling tankers,” stating that “all of [our national defense] needs air-refueling tankers.” The General’s primary request for the NDAA is to “accelerate the tanker program as best we can to take us out of the risk bathtub we’re in.”

The General stated in his testimony that “the numbers [regarding the production of air-refueling tankers] are daunting.” He indicated in his testimony that a build rate of fewer than twelve aircraft per year is not an adequate amount or pace to address the critical need. He stated, “if we had 1,000 tankers, it might be enough.” To begin to bridge this gap, the Air Force requested funding for three additional KC-46 tankers in their unfunded resolution for FY18. We echo their request and urge you to make this an annual commitment. Producing eighteen KC-46 tankers every year would heed the advice of national security experts and ensure that the military can meet this critical gap in national security capability.

In his testimony, General McDew acknowledged that should the KC-46s not come off the line in time, then a contingency plan must be put into place to address the urgent need for air-refueling tankers. Outdated KC-10 tanker models have already reached their expected life, and ceasing their current phase-out would be costly. We must work together with national security experts to decide and implement a contingency plan that addresses the first priority of the Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command.

We respectfully request that you increase the number of KC-46 tankers funded by the FY18 NDAA from fifteen to eighteen. We appreciate your attention and consideration to this important request.

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Sincerely,



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Tom MacArthur
Member of Congress



Frank LoBiondo
Member of Congress